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**NEWS RELEASE**

**2006 DAKOTA COUNTY JUVENILE PROSECUTION STATISTICS RELEASED**

**OVERVIEW**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2006 involving **juvenile prosecutions** handled by his Office. These statistics do not reflect the total number of crimes occurring, but reflect the number of charges filed against juveniles within Dakota County in 2006. In Minnesota, County Attorneys prosecute all crimes committed by juveniles (youth 10-17 years old) that occur in the county including felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors and some petty misdemeanors. Backstrom pointed out the following highlights:

- The total number of **juveniles charged**<sup>1</sup> with criminal offenses by his office decreased from 1,924<sup>2</sup> in 2005 to **1,842** in 2006 (down 4%).
- The number of **felony level juvenile offenders** charged decreased slightly from 362 in 2005 to **349** in 2006.

**2006 INCREASE/DECREASE IN JUVENILES CHARGED (BY CITY)**

Cities showing an **increase** in the number of juvenile offenders charged with offenses included:

- ↑ Burnsville (276 to 282)
- ↑ Dakota County Sheriff (47 to 69)
- ↑ Eagan (253 to 262)
- ↑ Farmington (59 to 81)
- ↑ Lakeville (178 to 196)
- ↑ Inver Grove Heights (129 to 137)
- ↑ West St. Paul (78 to 107)

Cities showing a **decrease** in the number of juvenile offenders charged included:

- ↓ Apple Valley (386 to 275)
- ↓ Hastings (143 to 124)
- ↓ Mendota Heights (52 to 35)
- ↓ Rosemount (121 to 101)
- ↓ South St. Paul (192 to 157)

## **OVERALL DECREASE IN JUVENILES PROSECUTED**

Backstrom said this is the fourth year in a row that Dakota County has experienced a decrease in the overall number of juveniles prosecuted for criminal acts. Backstrom also emphasized that most of the charges filed were for misdemeanor level offenses, i.e. only 349 youth were charged with a felony and 123 were charged with a gross misdemeanor. *"After almost tripling in the first six years of the 1990's, the overall number of juveniles prosecuted for criminal acts in Dakota County has leveled off considerably in the last ten years (see attached chart)," Backstrom commented.* The 2006 total (i.e. 1,842) is slightly less than the 2005 total (1,924) and is even lower than the number of Dakota County youth prosecuted for criminal offenses in 1998 (1,873). Juvenile prosecutions in the County actually peaked in 2002, when 2,070 youth were charged with crimes. *"It is obviously a good sign that the number of youth charged with a crime in our community has dropped for four straight years despite the 9% population growth of 10 to 17-year-olds in our County during this time," Backstrom added.*

## **JUVENILES CHARGED WITH FELONY OFFENSES**

Backstrom said the number of juveniles charged with a felony in 2006 fell slightly to **349** (compared to 362 in 2005). *Backstrom commented: "The fact that the number of felony offenses committed by juveniles in Dakota County is less today than it was ten years ago (see attached chart) is remarkable in a county of our size and growth."* Dakota County has grown on average about 3% per year over the last decade and is currently home to approximately 400,000 citizens. *Backstrom added: "I believe the low number of serious crimes involving juveniles in Dakota County is a reflection of the close working relationships that police departments have developed with schools through school resource officers and the many active prevention and early intervention efforts for youth provided by police, the County Attorney's Office and the Public Health Department."*

## **JUVENILE CRIMES OF VIOLENCE**

The number of charges for **violent juvenile offenses**<sup>3</sup> also dropped in 2006 to **382** from 410 in 2005 (see attached chart of juvenile violent crime charges in Dakota County over the last decade). Backstrom said the main violent crime committed by juveniles was misdemeanor assault, although these charges also decreased from 245 offenses charged in 2005 to **224** in 2006. *Backstrom commented: "The number of violent juvenile offenses charged in Dakota County in 2006 (i.e. 382) is actually less today than it was in 1997 (i.e. 424) and lower than the ten-year average (i.e. 419), again both remarkable statistics given Dakota County's continuing growth of its juvenile population."*

## **SCHOOL-RELATED CRIME/VIOLENCE**

Backstrom estimates that 40% of the juvenile offenses happen in schools or on school property which is not that surprising given this is where young people spend most of their time during the school year. However, he emphasized that Dakota County schools (and those elsewhere) remain a safe place for students and staff. The reality is that law enforcement, schools and the County Attorney's Office work together and act quickly to incidents involving rumored hit lists, weapons being brought to school or notes containing threats to others. In 2006, **36** youth were charged with school-related violent felonies. 15\* youth possessed dangerous weapons on school property (includes felonies, gross misdemeanors and misdemeanors). This included BB guns, an Air-Soft gun, replica firearm, knife or switchblade, and a MacGyver bomb. 22\* youth were charged with making terroristic threats (a felony). *(\*One youth was charged with both possession of a dangerous weapon and terroristic threats).*

The County Attorney's Office continued to **Prioritize Prosecutions in Schools** (PPS) in 2006 by prioritizing and quickly prosecuting crimes that occur in school or at school-related activities. This PPS initiative which was put in place in 2003, involves closer contact between the County Attorney's Office and schools and

includes trainings for students and staff, community forums, prevention programming and sharing of information, in addition to fast tracking on crimes associated with school activities. Backstrom noted: *"By working together with Dakota County school districts and police departments, we insure a healthier and safer learning environment for children. Quicker prosecution of crimes occurring in schools or on school property also serves as a deterrent to future criminal activity by youth."*

## **PREVENTION, EARLY INTERVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMS**

**Prevention** of juvenile crime has long been a priority for County Attorney Backstrom, who has served as a co-chair of the Juvenile Justice Committees for both the Minnesota County Attorneys Association and the National District Attorneys Association for many years. *"I am a strong believer in prevention, early intervention, and education efforts to reduce juvenile crime," Backstrom stated. "I believe the single most effective thing we can do to reduce crime in our nation is to invest time, resources and energy in our nation's children," he added.*

Backstrom indicated that the Dakota County Attorney's Office coordinates a number of **youth accountability programs for first time offenders** involved in the illegal use of alcohol, small amounts of marijuana, and tobacco, as well as lower-level property crimes. A more intensive program for second time users of alcohol or small amounts of marijuana is also available. In total, **1,834 juvenile offenders were referred to various accountability programs** as an alternative to juvenile court in 2006, which increased almost 20% from 1,534 in 2005.

Juveniles successfully completing these programs are not prosecuted in juvenile court for these offenses. Youth accountability programs are designed to insure that youth committing certain first or second time non-violent offenses are held responsible for their criminal behavior quickly outside of the courtroom. *Backstrom commented: "While these programs divert youthful offenders outside of the court process, they are designed to insure appropriate accountability with an education and prevention focus. Youth pay for the cost of attending these alternatives to court, which is equivalent to the fine they would receive from a judge for these offenses and, where appropriate, pay restitution to the victim and complete some community work service. A parent or guardian is also required to attend all youth accountability programs with their child, which we believe is important and necessary.*

A newer program in operation since 2003 is the **Juvenile Drug Court**. This focused "problem-solving" court intervention is designed to provide greater oversight and treatment of youth who are chemically addicted. In 2006, 15 youth were participating in the Juvenile Drug Court Program at any given time. The Juvenile Drug Court handles cases involving any type of crime where alcohol or drugs are the primary contributing factor for the criminal behavior. *Backstrom commented: "While no where near the problem it is involving adult crime, possession and use of illegal drugs is a significant contributor to crimes involving juveniles as well. Drug courts involve more interaction with the Judge and other criminal justice professionals and emphasize more intensive monitoring and treatment. Such courts can help offenders overcome their chemical addictions and have a proven success rate in reducing recidivism across America."*

The **Peer Court program**, which is a joint project of the District Court, Community Corrections and the County Attorney, has been in existence since 2000 and takes place in seven area high schools Eastview (Apple Valley), Burnsville, Hastings, Simley (Inver Grove Heights), Lakeville North and South, and South St. Paul. Peer Court allows teens to serve as jurors and personally become involved in resolving the problem of juvenile crime in their community. *"Peer Court is not only a unique way of holding juvenile offenders accountable for their actions, it is a great learning experience for members of the peer jury," Backstrom noted.* In 2006, **56** juveniles were referred to Peer Court. District Court Judge Tom Poch was instrumental in establishing this program and remains active in its implementation in Dakota County.

The **Juvenile Firesetter Education and Intervention program** is for youth ages 6-17 who are curious about or caught lighting a fire. **31** Dakota County juveniles (and their parents) were referred in 2006. This quarterly educational class, which is coordinated by the Dakota County Attorney's Office, has been well received and is a joint project with the State Fire Marshall's Office and local fire departments in our community.

## **JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES**

Backstrom indicated that his office was involved in numerous crime prevention efforts in 2006. The **Accelerated Court Truancy Program (ACT)** includes Independent School District 200 (Hastings), Independent School District 197 (West St. Paul, Mendota Heights and part of Eagan), and District 199 (Inver Grove Heights). Judge Leslie Metzen played a critical role in initiating the ACT pilot program. Judge Ed Lynch, Judge Richard Spicer, and Judge Michael Mayer are active in the program. The program requires all truants and a parent or guardian to attend an accelerated truancy diversion meeting, along with a judge, prosecutor and school administrative personnel after a youth's third unexcused absence from school. Traditional truancy efforts do not result in intervention until after a seventh unexcused absence and court action does not usually occur until after 10-11 unexcused absences. The accelerated program is designed to address these unexcused absences more quickly in hopes of getting these children off the streets and back into school. Backstrom said that studies have shown that children who are truant from school are more likely to engage in criminal behavior and abuse alcohol and other drugs. *"Keeping kids in school not only helps them get the education they need to become successful and productive adults, it reduces crime in our community," Backstrom noted.*

An **anti-bullying initiative**, launched by the County Attorney as part of the PPS program during the 2002-03 school year, continues to be a successful program of educating students on the dangers of bullying and harassing behaviors. Presentations on this topic are also made to teachers and community members throughout the year. Backstrom indicated that although bullying is often dismissed as part of growing up, it is actually an early form of aggressive and violent behavior. *Backstrom commented: "Bullying adversely impacts more children than most adults realize. Bullying peaks in middle school and can become even more dangerous if it continues into high school."* It has been reported that 160,000 children skip school every day in America because they fear being attacked or intimidated by another student. Up to 60% of children who bully will have a criminal record before the age of 24. Backstrom has developed two 45-minute presentations (one for grade 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> students and one for teachers or parents) which cover: types of bullying and harassing behavior, statistics associated with it, and valuable information for bullies, victims, bystanders, staff and parents. Over 10,000 students, teachers and parents have heard Backstrom's anti-bullying message.

Details of the juvenile cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office in 2006 are broken down on the attached charts by type of crime and jurisdiction. In addition to the three statistical charts, attached are three separate charts that cover trends in overall juvenile delinquency prosecutions, juvenile violent crime charges and juvenile dangerous weapons charges. This information is also available on the Dakota County Attorney website at <http://www.dakotacounty.us/LawJustice/News>. **If you have any questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.**

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<sup>1</sup> Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

<sup>2</sup> An individual may be charged with more than one felony offense in one behavioral incident.

<sup>3</sup> Violent juvenile offenses include all levels of homicide, attempted homicide, assault, offenses involving dangerous weapons, kidnapping, robbery, sex offenses and terroristic threats. The statistics in this section reflect the number of charges and not juvenile offenders. A juvenile offender may be charged with more than one offense in a single behavioral incident.

## 2006 JUVENILE FELONY OFFENSES

<b>OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY</b>  <b>JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY</b> <b>1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438</b>	Burglary	Theft Related	Criminal Damage to Property	Drug Related	Dangerous Weapons*	Sex Related*	Terroristic Threats*	Assault Related*	Forgery Related	Receiving Stolen Property	Unauthorized Use Motor Vehicle	Robbery*	Fleeing In A Motor Vehicle	Arson	Gambling Related	Public Health & Safety	Criminal Vehicle Injury*	Homicide (Including Attempts)*	Kidnapping*	Traffic Related	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	9	6	3	4	6	6	9	0	3	4	0	8	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	40
Burnsville	18	17	10	4	1	5	3	1	4	3	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	72	53
Dakota County Sheriff *	6	2	6	1	0	4	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	22
Eagan	32	7	8	2	12	2	3	8	2	3	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	83	62
Farmington	5	1	0	5	0	2	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	17
Hastings	3	3	3	1	1	7	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	25
Inver Grove Heights	11	2	1	1	1	0	2	3	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	22
Lakeville	18	2	4	5	2	3	3	3	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	46	42
Mendota Heights	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Other Law Enforcement	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	5
Rosemount	1	6	3	7	2	0	0	3	3	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	26
South St. Paul	12	0	5	1	2	0	1	1	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	22
West St. Paul	3	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>349</b>

\* Drug-related are reported under the city in which the offense occurred. The Drug Task Force includes representatives from the Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, Savage, South St. Paul and West St. Paul Police Departments and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.

\*\* Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

## 2006 JUVENILE GROSS MISDEMEANOR OFFENSES

<b>OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY</b>  <b>JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY</b> <b>1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438</b>	Theft	Obstructing Justice	Criminal Damage to Property	Dangerous Weapons*	Forgery Related	Stolen Property	Sex Related*	Burglary	Assault-Related*	Traffic Related	Arson	Escape from Custody	Intent to Escape Tax on MV	Traffic Related	Disorderly Conduct	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	5	5	2	2	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	20	19
Burnsville	6	1	6	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	18	14
Dakota County Sheriff *	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Eagan	5	2	1	0	8	2	3	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	25
Farmington	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Hastings	1	4	5	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	11
Inver Grove Heights	3	2	0	4	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	13	9
Lakeville	2	3	1	2	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	15
Mendota Heights	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Other Law Enforcement	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1
Rosemount	2	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	6
South St. Paul	2	2	1	5	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	12
West St. Paul	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>123</b>

\* Drug-related are reported under the city in which the offense occurred. The Drug Task Force includes representatives from the Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, Savage, South St. Paul and West St. Paul Police Departments and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.

\*\* Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

## 2006 JUVENILE MISDEMEANOR & PETTY MISDEMEANOR OFFENSES

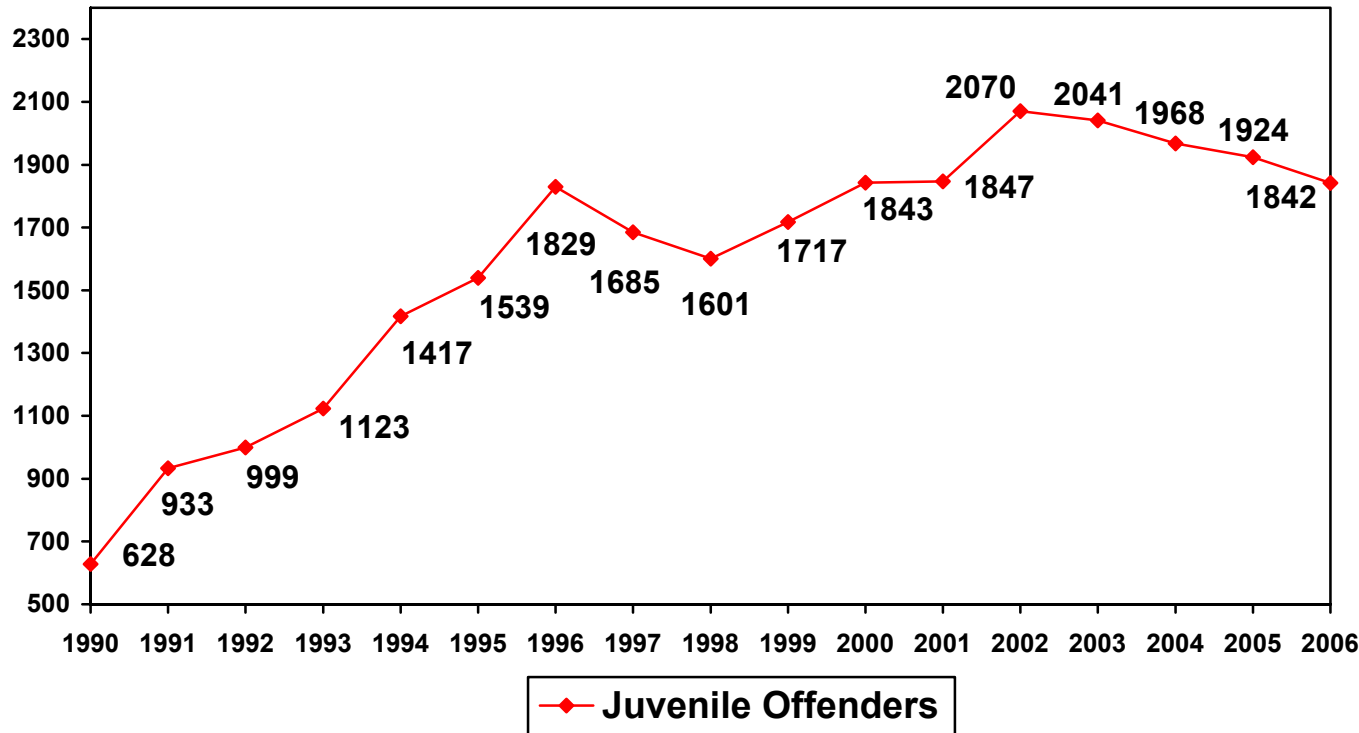
<div style="text-align: center;"> <b>OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY</b>   <b>JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438</b> </div>	Disorderly Conduct Related	Theft	Assault Related*	Petty Offenses	Traffic Citations	Consumption/Possession of Alcohol	Traffic Misdemeanors	Criminal Damage to Property	Obstructing Justice (Non-Traffic)	Burglary; Trespassing	Stolen Property	Public Nuisance	Ordinance Violation/Non-weapon	Tampering with a Motor Vehicle	Ordinance Violation/Weapon Related	Dangerous Weapons*	Arson	Legend Drugs & Equipment	Violation of an OFP or Harassment Order	Possess Small Amount Marijuana-Petty	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	94	38	36	28	12	16	20	12	4	14	6	3	2	4	1	0	0	2	0	0	292	216
Burnsville	49	97	22	24	13	9	17	11	10	9	2	0	7	5	3	4	0	0	0	0	282	215
Dakota County Sheriff	15	4	6	4	10	3	4	5	2	0	1	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	59	45
Eagan	63	36	46	12	8	13	11	17	13	1	4	2	1	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	234	175
Farmington	20	10	11	3	3	3	4	1	2	3	6	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	71	62
Hastings	27	25	16	7	7	3	3	11	1	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	110	88
Inver Grove Heights	58	14	15	11	7	8	2	3	6	4	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	133	106
Lakeville	46	47	18	12	13	20	6	6	8	7	1	0	2	7	2	1	0	0	1	0	197	139
Mendota Heights	13	2	1	3	11	2	4	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	30
Other Law Enforcement	2	0	0	4	6	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	10
Rosemount	20	19	8	15	7	1	2	3	0	0	1	6	5	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	89	69
South St. Paul	63	17	31	4	0	4	8	11	4	5	3	1	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	156	123
West St. Paul	23	41	14	11	5	10	9	1	9	3	1	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	133	92
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1811</b>	<b>1370</b>

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\*\* Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

# RECENT TRENDS IN **JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PROSECUTIONS**

## Filed by the Dakota County Attorney's Office



These include some petty misdemeanors and all misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors and felonies committed by Dakota County youth under the age of 18 in Dakota County. While the overall growth in juvenile offenders charged with criminal offenses in Dakota County since 1990 is 206%, the vast majority of this growth occurred from 1990 to 1996. In the last 10 years (1996-2005), the overall growth rate is only 5%.

Compiled by  
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# **Juvenile Violent Crime Charges in Dakota County**

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**Total Charges for Juvenile Crimes of Violence  
(Homicide, Attempted Homicide, Assault, Offenses Involving  
Dangerous Weapons, Kidnapping, Criminal Vehicular Homicide/Injury,  
Robbery, Sex Offenses and Terroristic Threats\*)**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Violent Crime Charges</u>
1997 .....	424
1998 .....	407
1999 .....	425
2000 .....	396
2001 .....	430
2002 .....	487
2003 .....	451
2004 .....	375
2005 .....	410
2006 .....	382
Ten Year Average ...	419

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\* The statistics do NOT include any juveniles prosecuted as adults for any of these crimes. In 2005, 6 juveniles were prosecuted as adults.

# RECENT TRENDS IN JUVENILE DANGEROUS WEAPONS- RELATED CHARGES

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Felonies</b>	23	34	22	28	35	30	23	30	26	30
<b>Gross Misdemeanors</b>	7	5	5	12	6	3	8	17	7	15
<b>Misdemeanors</b>	17	19	17	10	8	4	11	11	2	10
<b>Ordinance Violations</b>	14	13	8	15	12	11	9	5	19	11
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>66</b>

**Ten-Year Average is 59**

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